THE PROJECT:

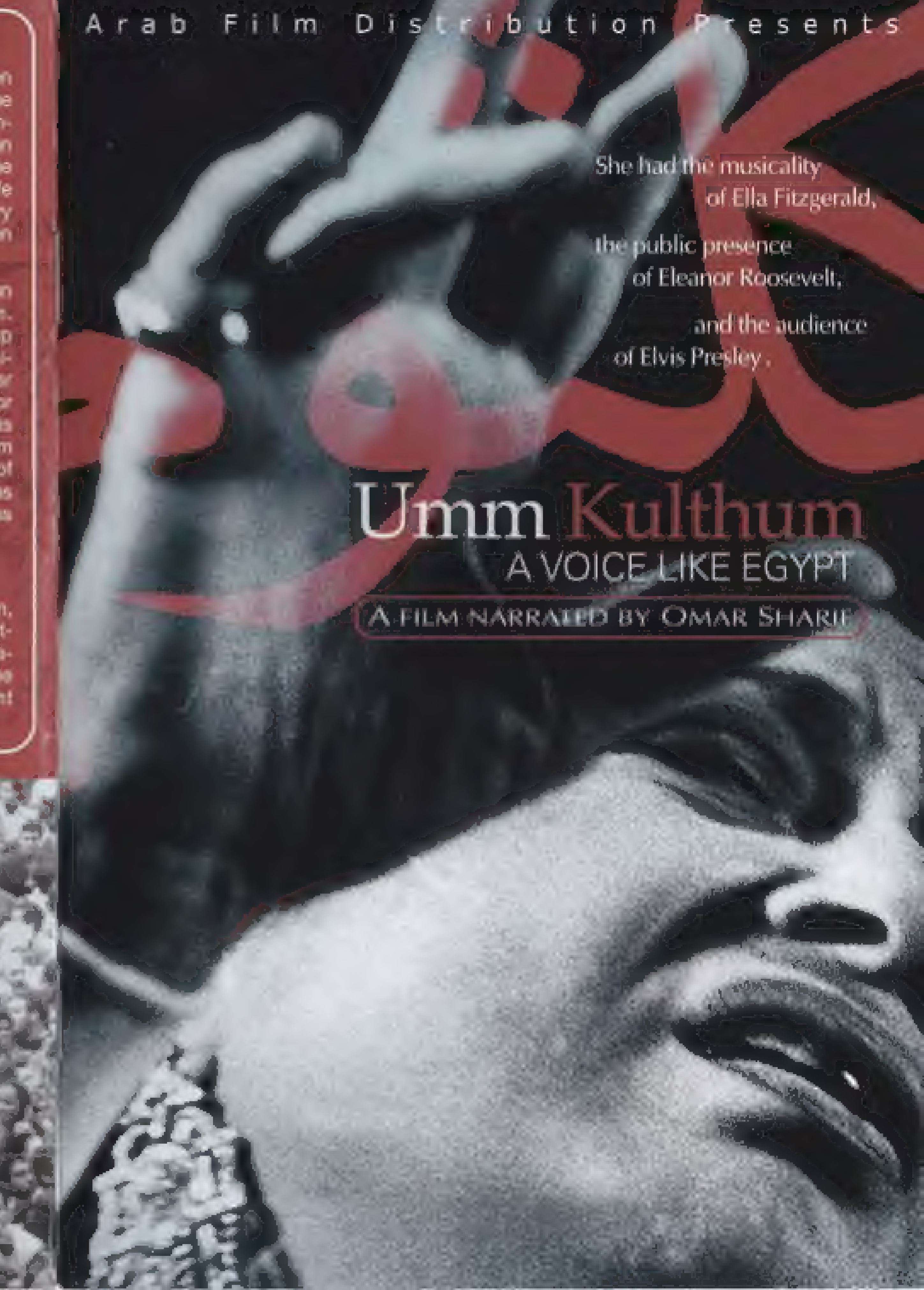
American director Michal Goldman moved to Cairo in 1992 for a year-long stay. Even more striking to her than the colorful look of the city was its rich mixture of sounds. The clatter of donkey carts, the roar of construction equipment, blaring car horns, the constant chatter of human voices, and street music filled her ears. After a while she began to recognize the omnipresent voice of Umm Kulthum on daily radio broadcasts and in the city's cafes, shops and taxis. The singer had died in 1975, yet people from all walks of life spoke of her as if she was still alive. To Goldman, Umm Kulthum's music and story seemed to be an important thread running through Egypt's modern history. It was then that the director decided to create a film about Egypt and Umm Kulthum.

Goldman was aided in her research by a fortuitous encounter with Virginia Danielson, an American musicologist who was in Cairo writing a scholarly book about Umm Kulthum. Able to read all of the available Arabic sources on the famed singer, Danielson opened up the nuances of the subject to Goldman. The director spent an entire year collecting archival materials and writing, then filmed and edited over the next year. She worked with Misr International Films in Cairo, a production company formed by Egypt's renowned director Youssef Chahine. She also worked with cinematographer Kamal Abd Al-Aziz, who has worked with Egypt's new generation of directors, including Mohamed Khan. For Umm Kulthum, A Voice Like Egypt, Abd Al-Aziz managed to combine the visual languages of documentary and dramatic cinema. The film was shot on video and 16mm film and was shown in theaters in the USA and on a number of public broadcasting channels across the country and abroad.

THE DVD :

Arab Film Distribution is proud to offer this special edition DVD release of Umm Kulthum, A Voice Like Egypt, which includes a new digital video transfer of the film and an insightful audio commentary from director Michel Goldman. The accompanying booklet features a selection of photographs collected by the filmmaker during her stay in Egypt. The photos represent the various people and stories from Umm Kulthum's life and highlight her impact on Egypt and the Arab world.

Arab Film Distribution



Umm Kulthum's home village,
Tammay Al-Zahayra.

Umm Kulthum's father,
Ibrahim Al-Baltagi.

The Nile Delta.

Fataya Ahmad: 1930s.

* A famous singer during Umm Kulthums early years.

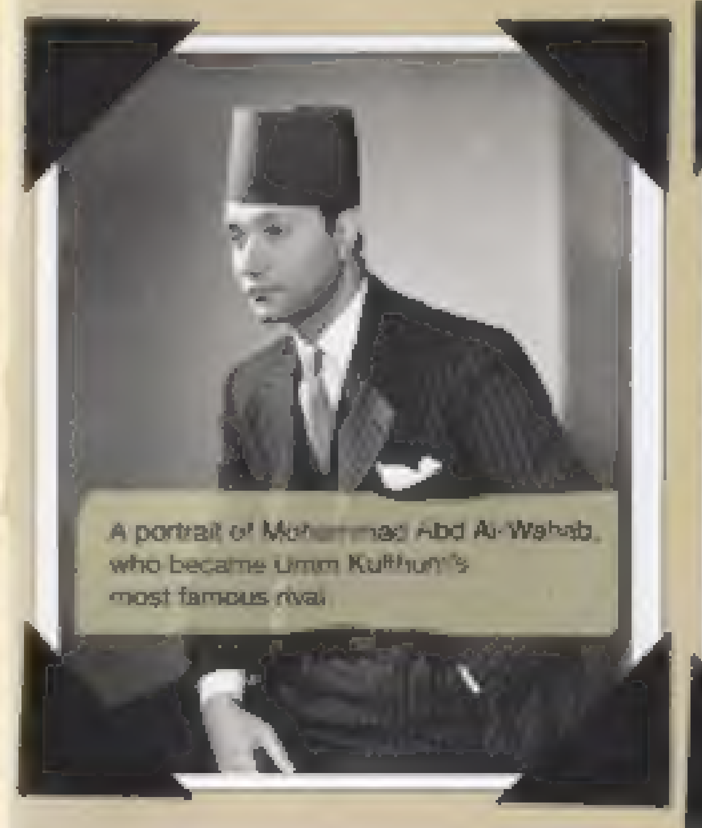
Bedia Al-Masabni: 1930s

* Another popular singer from this era.

Shepherd Hotel in Cairo. 1930s - 1940s.
" one of the most famous & elegant hotels in the world.

Front entrance to the Shepherd Hotel

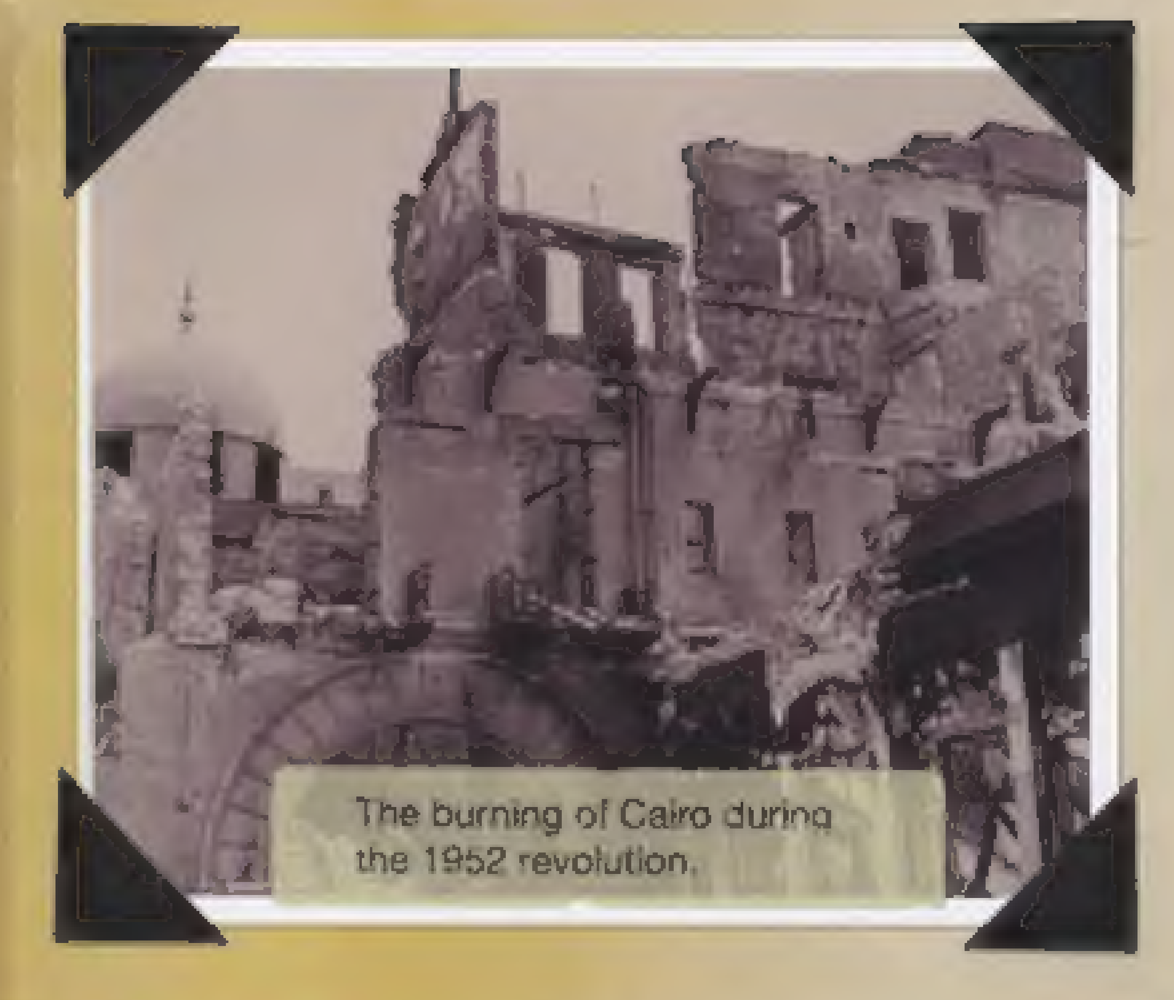
A banquet in honor of
Sa'ad Zaghloul.



A portrait of Mohammad Abd Al-Wahab, who became Umm Kulthum's most famous rival.

The young singer Ismahan, a princess from the mountains of Lebanon, rivaled Umm Kulthum for the people's affection.

Umm Kulthum with a friend, 1930s.


The burning of Cairo during the 1952 revolution.

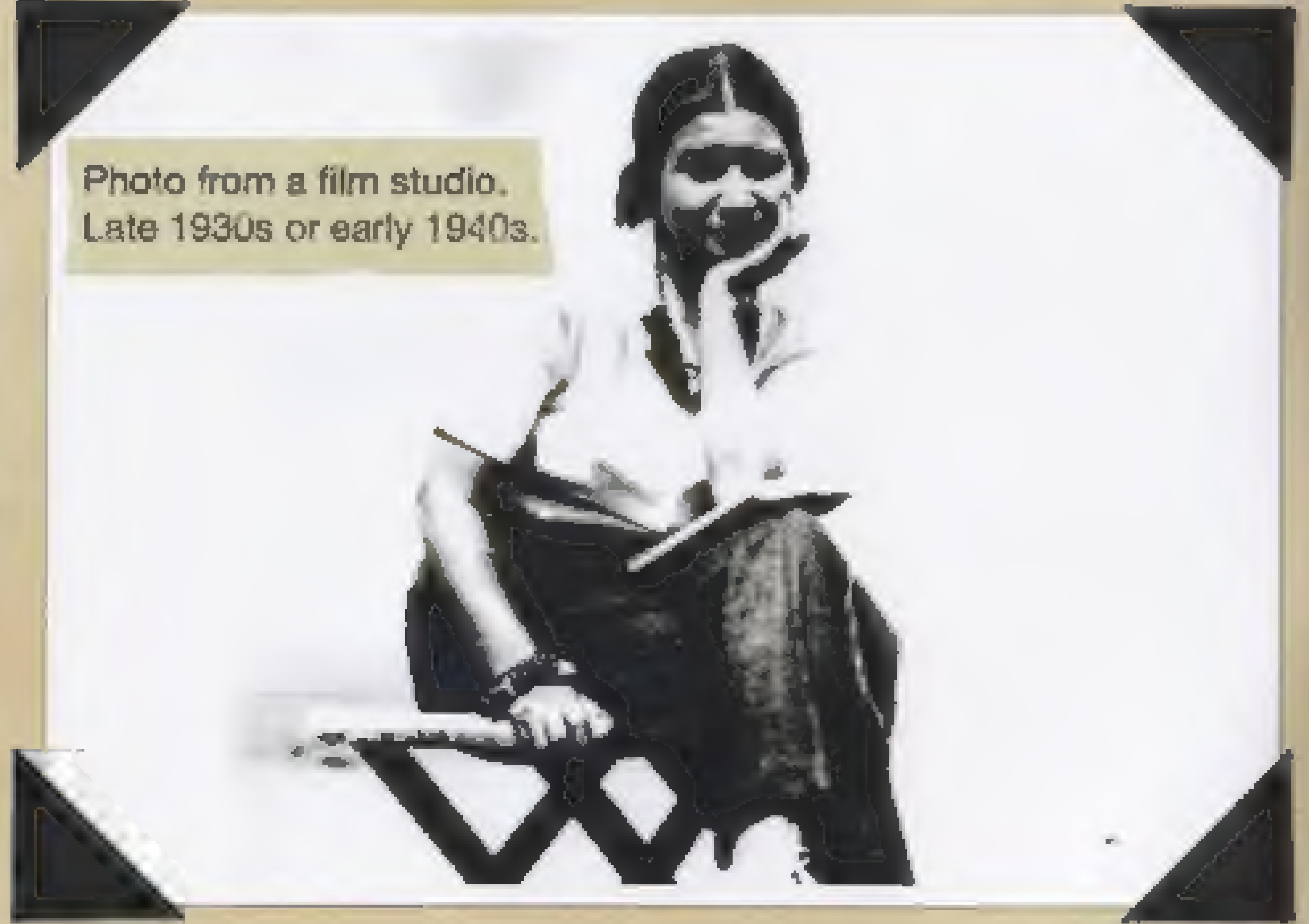
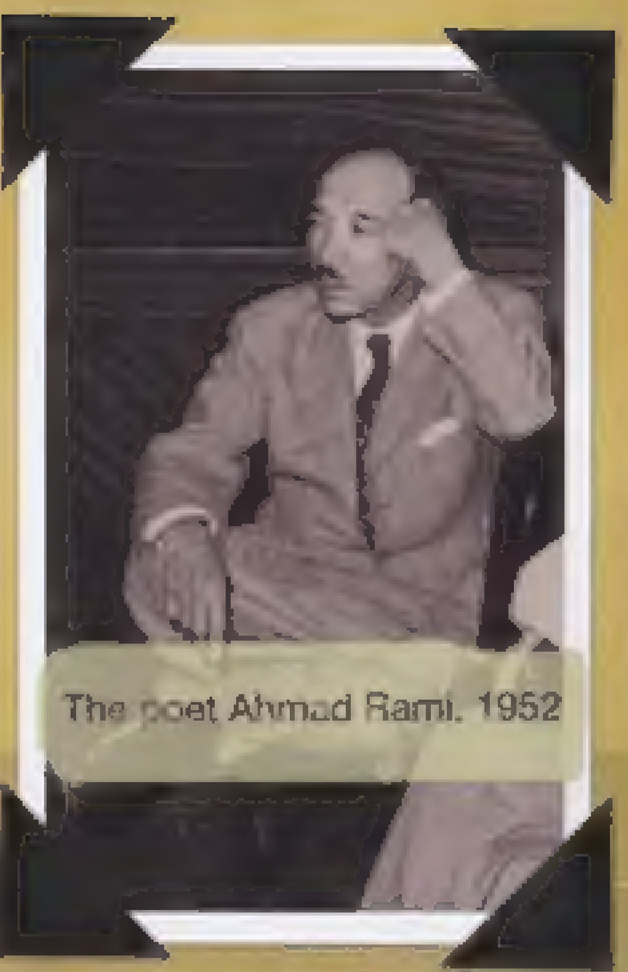


Photo from a film studio. Late 1930s or early 1940s.

Demonstration in Cairo in honor of the troops returning from Faluga after the 1948 war against Israel.

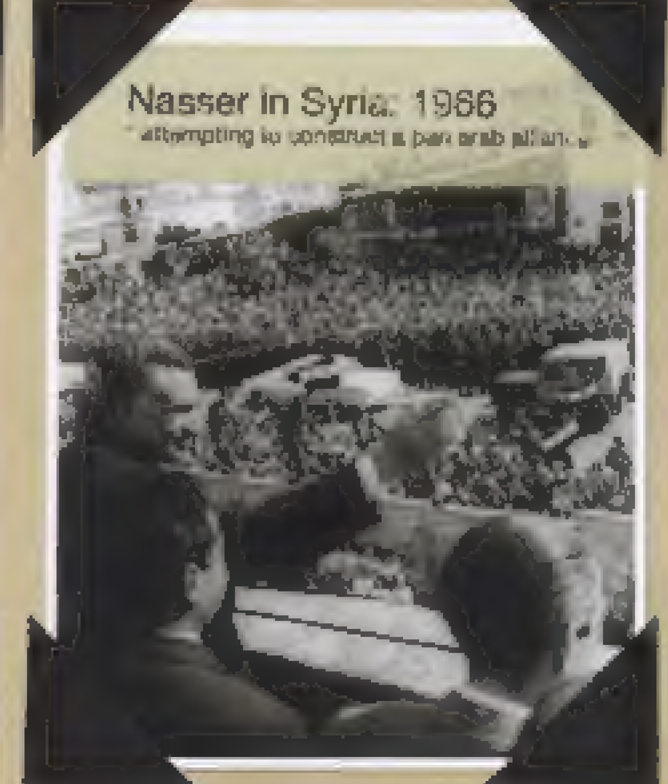
Umm Kulthum promotional portrait, 1945.


The poet Ahmad Rami, 1952

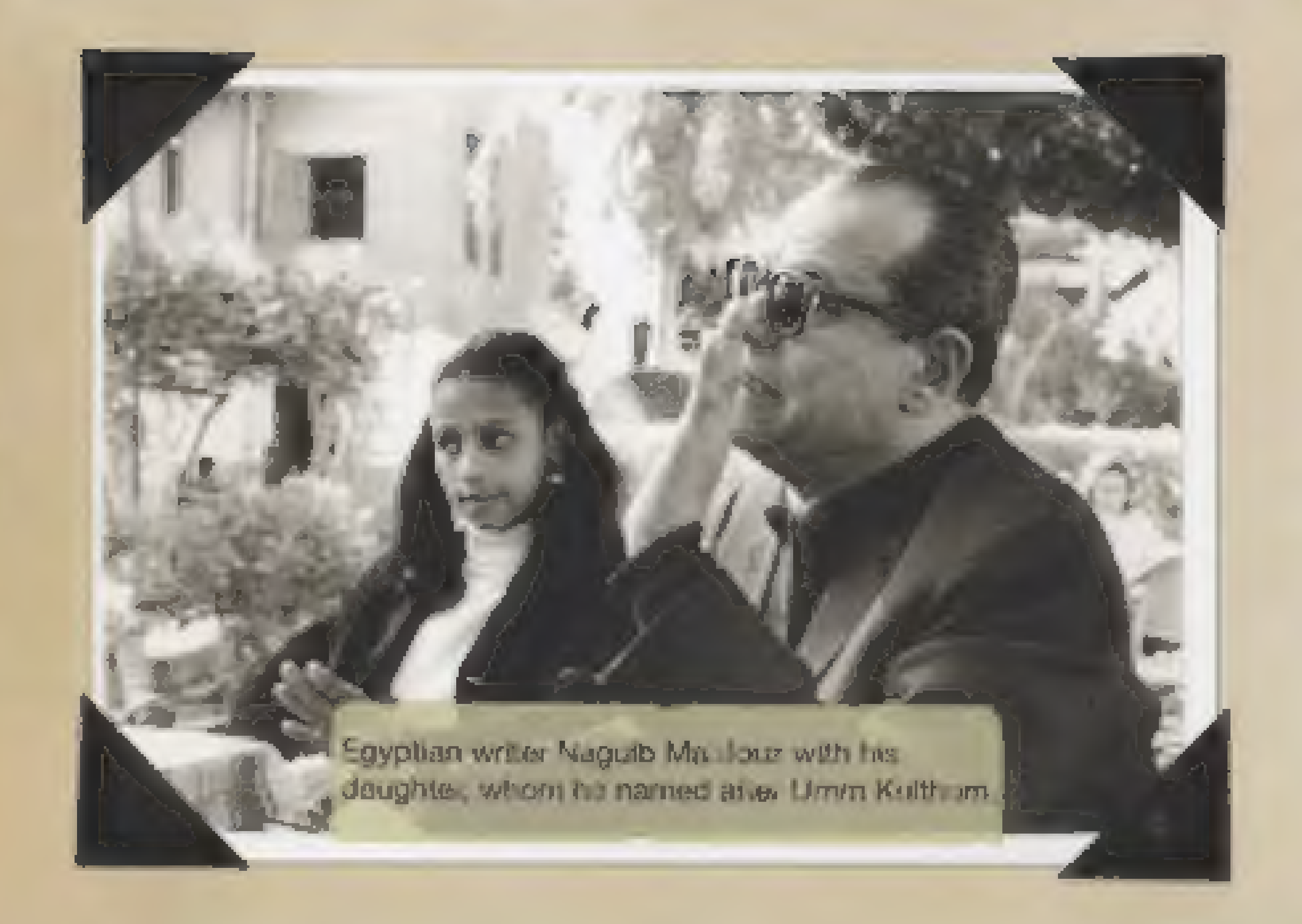
Nasser attended many of Umm Kulthum's concerts. Here, in 1953, he is flanked by Sukarno & Abdel Hakim Amer.

Umm Kulthum in concert: 1955

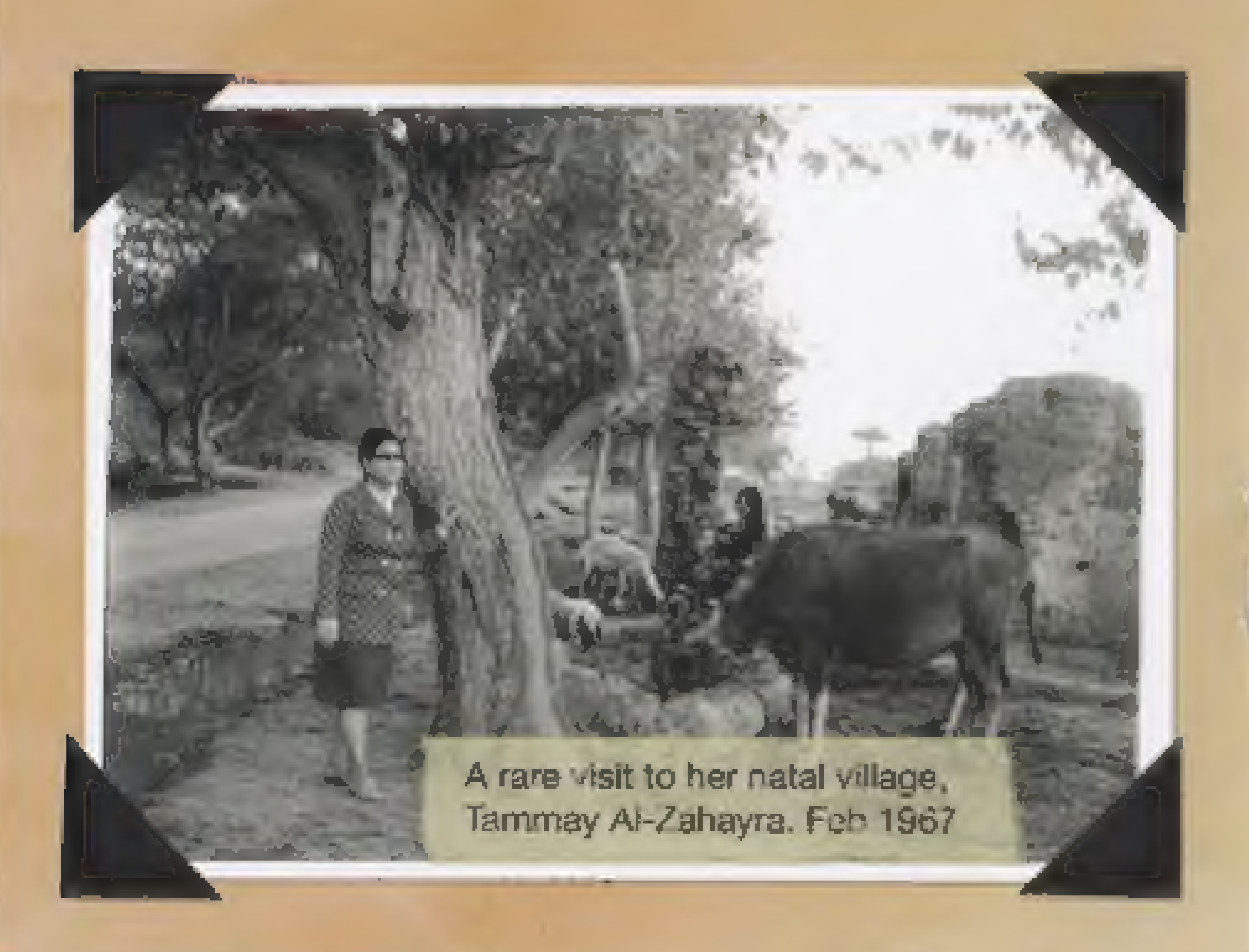
Backstage with the band: 1950s


Nasser in Syria: 1966
attempting to construct a pan arab alliance

Umm Kulthum & Mohammad Abd Al-Wahab receive an honor from President Nasser. Feb 1967



Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz with his daughter, whom he named after Umm Kulthum.



A rare visit to her natal village, Tammay Al-Zahayra. Feb 1967

A garden party at a palace.

Backstage before a concert. Late 1960s.

On the front steps of her villa. Late 1960s.

By 1967 Umm Kulthum had achieved the iconic status of the Sphynx.

Umm Kulthum in Concert. 1967

Singing in the fields of Tammay Al-Zahayra. Feb 1967.

Umm Kulthum, as a good-will ambassador with a folk troop in Morocco, probably 1968.

Performing in Abu Dhabi. 1970.

Umm Kulthum praying at a Mosque in Tunis, probably 1968.

Umm Kulthum with Prince Abdullah Al-Faisal, around 1970 or so.

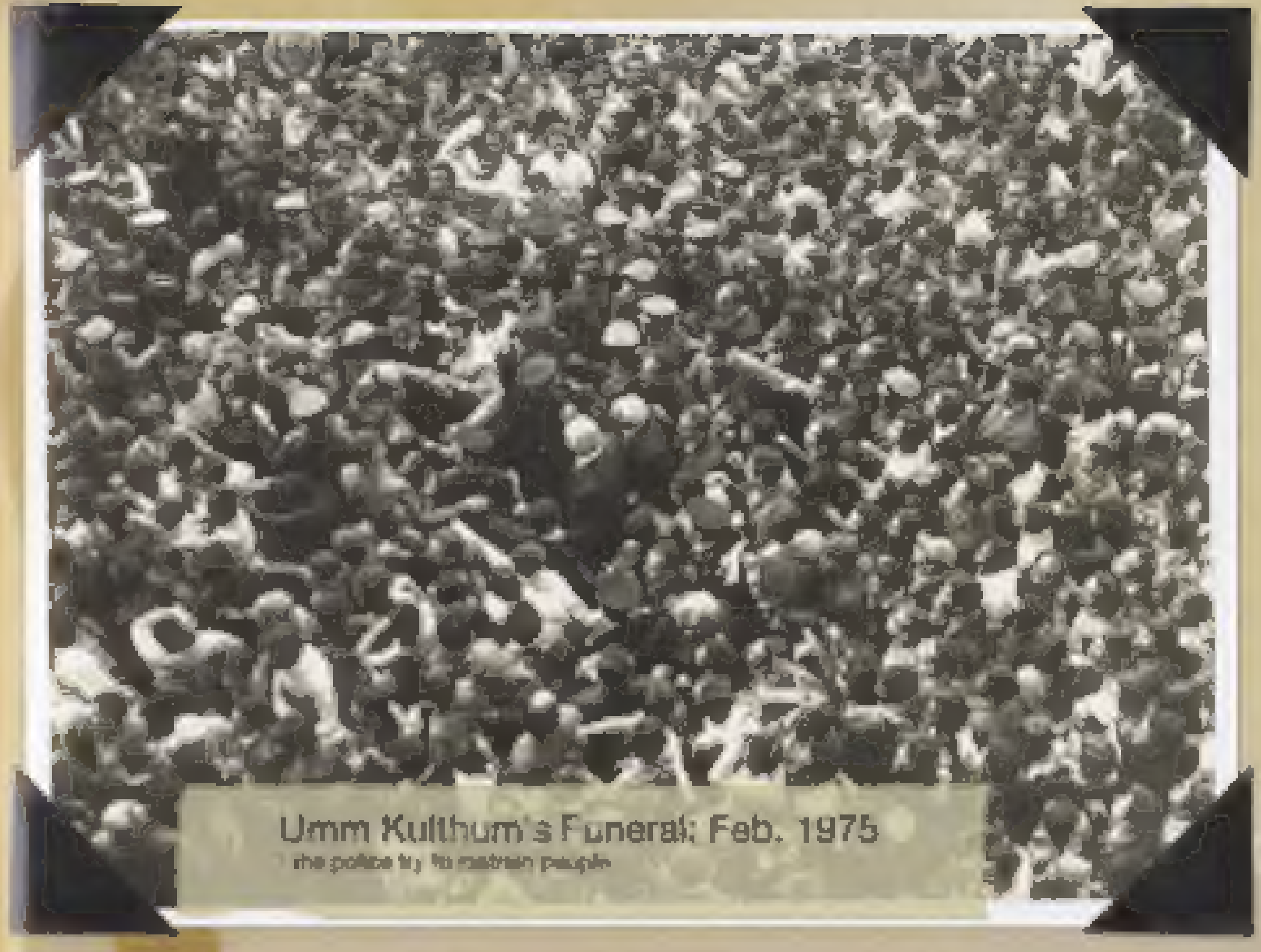
Children playing on a captured Israeli tank. October, 1973.

A woman responds to a headline of Umm Kulthum's death. Feb 3, 1975.

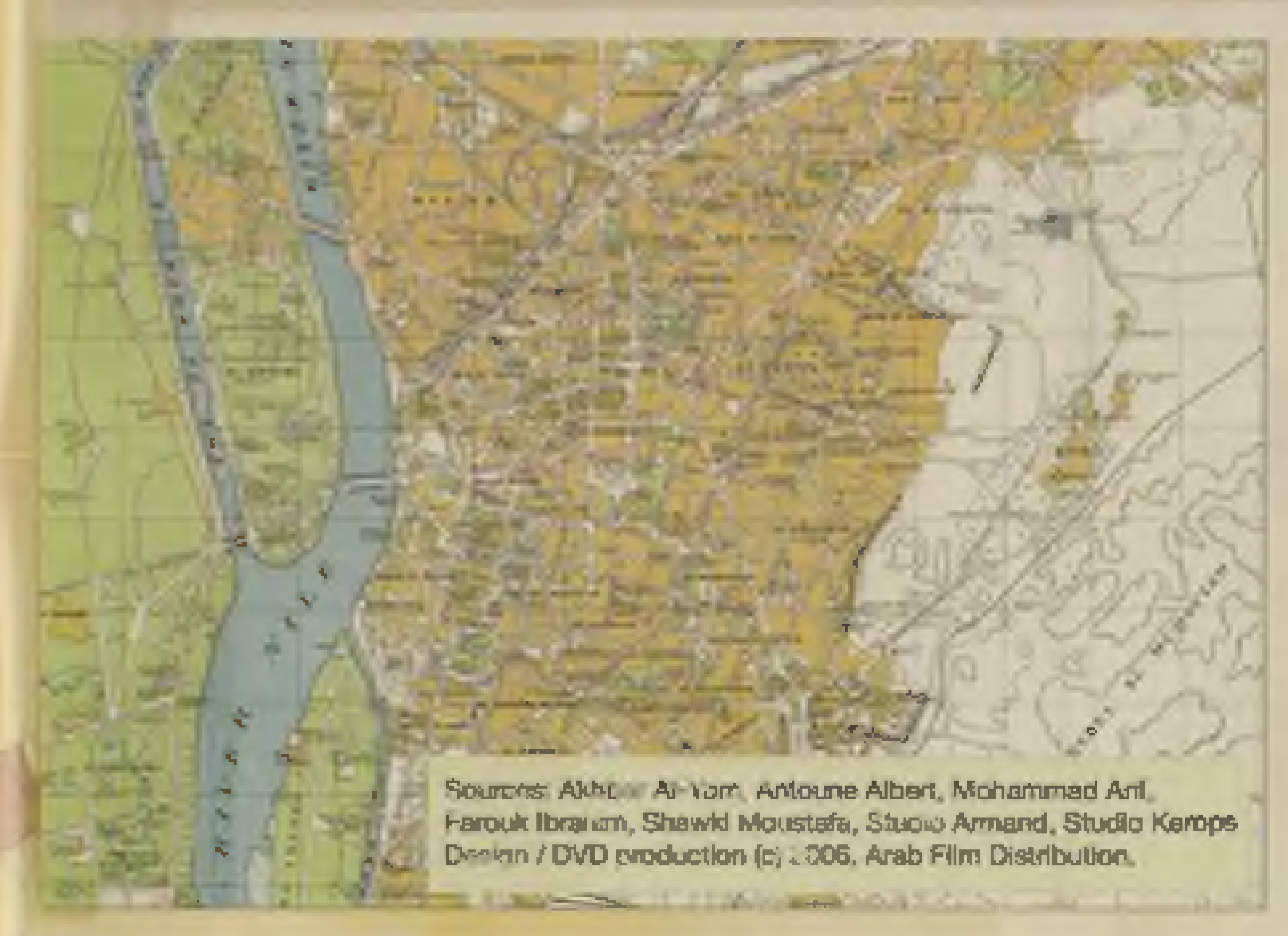
The Egyptians reclaim Suez.
* October War of 1973

Umm Kulthum's Funeral: Feb. 1975

* Over 4 million mourners attended this gathering. One of the largest in history.



Umm Kulthum's Funeral: Feb. 1975
the police try to restrain people



Sources: Akhbar Al-Yom, Antoune Albert, Mohammad Arif, Farouk Ibrahim, Shawki Moustafa, Studio Armand, Studio Kerops
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